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A
L E T T E R
FROM
PERCIVAL STOCKDALE
TO ^k
GRANVILLE SHARP Esq.
SUGGESTED TO THE AUTHOUR,
BY THE
PRESENT INSURRECTION OF THE NEGROES,
IN
THE ISLAND OF ST. DOMINGO.

MAN IS AS DESTITUTE OF MERCY AS ANY WILD BEAST,
WHEN THE RAPACITY, AND TYRANNY OF HIS NA-
TURE, ARE UNDER NO CONTROUL.

Plutarch, in his Life of Cicero.

D U R H A M:
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BIRCHIN LANE.

LETTER

FROM

RECEIVED STOCKDALE

GRANVILLE SHARP ESQ

RESIDENT OF THE BATHURST

PRESENTED BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM



THE DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM
HAS RECEIVED FROM THE
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BY R. H. A. M.

PRINTED BY L. FENNIMORE

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BY W. CLARKE, NEW BOND STREET; AND
AND FENNIMORE, CHURCH STREET, T. AND
BEING THE FIRST VOLUME OF THE
BATHURST PAPERS, AND THE
SECOND PART

About one hundred thousand human beings are annually taken by force, from the coast of AFRICA. Of this number, to use the frozen language of commerce, forty-five thousand are lost; to speak with a moral force, and propriety, forty-five
a thousand

thousand are, eventually, murdered, before any additional stock is received by the colonies. Twenty-five thousand die in the middle passage; twenty thousand, in the seasoning in the WEST-INDIES. I omit, here, a numerical account of the destruction among those who are engaged in wars, which are excited, and promoted by people who call themselves Christians, merely to procure Slaves; nor do I give an accurate attention to the great diminution of the numbers of those who are driven, like sheep, from the interior parts of their country; they perish in multitudes, in a journey of about twelve hundred miles, performed on foot, through inhospitable woods, and desarts. It is not exaggeration, to assert, that for one who lives to labour, for any time, in the WEST INDIES, ten are destroyed.

It appears, even from LIVERPOOL-evidence, that if mankind, in general, were to die, in proportion to the mortality of the Slaves during their transportation to the Colonies, the human race would be extinct in ten years. Since this detestable

table trade began, nine millions of our fellow-creatures have been torne from their dearest connexions, and sold into slavery.

All the working Slaves, in the WEST INDIES, are extinct in every fourth, or fifth year, from the time of their transportation : consequently, in that number of years, a new, and complete supply of Slaves is demanded. Their change of climate, as the cause of this prodigious mortality, will not be admitted by common sense : he who was born under the line, will enjoy good health, and long life (if any justice is done to his constitution) in the the latitude of 18, or 20 degrees. Man was formed, with an enterprising, and expansive mind ; he was formed for a variety of adventures ; for various inquiries, and improvements in knowledge ; therefore, he ought nobly, and intrepidly, to deem himself, what he really is, a citizen of the globe. Providence always adapts the means to the ends ; consequently, man, while he obeys the laws of temperance, has a more flexible, and ductile bodily constitution

(if I may use the expressions) than that of any other animal. DANES, and SWEDES live, with ease, in AFRICA; and Negroes, in SCOTLAND.

From the complete mortality of the Negroes, in the WEST INDIES, in every fourth year, the gross falsehood, and impudence of men interested in the Slave Trade is evident, who assert, that those unfortunate people are as well treated, on the plantations, abroad, as our labouring men are, in the island of GREAT BRITAIN. That complete mortality alone proves, that they suffer every extreme of barbarity.

I beg leave, here, to add a few incontrovertible, a few demonstrated facts: some of them are cruelly interesting to humanity.

“ Mr How, who was employed by government
 “ to go up the country, deposes, that it's inland
 “ parts are every where well cultivated; that
 “ they abound in plantations of rice, millet, potatoes, cotton, and indigo. The inhabitants, he
 informs

“ informs us, are quick in learning languages,
 “ and remarkably industrious, hospitable, and
 “ obliging.—It appears, that they possess noble,
 “ and heroick minds; which disdain slavery,
 “ and frequently seek refuge from it, in the arms
 “ of death. Let us not again be told of the
 “ happiness which they enjoy, under the benevolent
 “ care of the planters; Mr COOK deposed, that
 “ setting Slaves to work in the morning, is attend-
 “ ed with loud peals of the most terrible flogging:
 “ and General TOTTENHAM,—that there is no
 “ comparison between regimental punishment,
 “ which only cuts the skin, and that of the planta-
 “ tions, which cuts out the flesh. Captain HALL
 “ deposed, that the punishments of the Negroes
 “ are extremely shocking, much more so than
 “ those which are inflicted in ships of war. We
 “ know from Captain SMITH, that at every
 “ stroke of the whip, a piece of flesh is cut out:
 “ and from Mr ROSS,—that a comparison be-
 “ tween the treatment of West Indian Slaves, and
 “ that of the British peasantry, is an insult to
 “ common sense.”

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“The day hardly dawns, when the whip re-
 “sounds through those regions of horror ; nor
 “does it cease till darkness closes the dreadful
 “scene, which is every day repeated. The mi-
 “serable victims, while they are destitute of
 “every source of comfort of body, and of mind ;
 “while they are sinking under hunger, torture,
 “and extreme labour, are urged to exertions
 “which they are unable to sustain ; and often
 “at length expire beneath the lash, which in
 “vain endeavours to rouse them to a renewal of
 “of their toil.” *

When these human beings, from a natural, and
 necessary consequence of the frame with which
 Heaven endowed them, rise against their oppres-
 sors ; by our very feeling, and reflecting coun-
 trymen, they are termed savages, and rebels. But
 they are the savages, who, precipitated by rapa-
 city, destroy, and tear to pieces, their fellow-
 creatures

* See an Abstract of the Evidences on the Slave-Trade,

creatures ;—and they are the rebels, who, by this insatiable passion, and by these merciless deeds, rebel against the fixed, and eternal laws, against the MAJESTY of their CREATOR.

A LETTER

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A
L E T T E R
T O
GRANVILLE SHARP Esq.

DEAR SIR,

IT always gives me particular pleasure to write to *you*, on any subject. I feel an honest, and laudable pride, in corresponding with one, whose life is devoted to learning, to virtue, and to piety; with one, who is the ardent, and indefatigable friend of mankind. The present insurrection of the Africans in the island of ST. DOMINGO, has brought the Slave-Trade, with all its iniquities, and horrors, afresh into my mind. It has induced

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me to collect, and commit to paper, some of my thoughts on the subject. To you, I dare say, they will exhibit no sentiment, no argument, with which you are not, already, well acquainted. Such as they are, however, I beg your acceptance of them. If they are, at all fortunately selected; if they have any strength; and if they are distinctly expressed, your natural candour, and your love of their tendency, will incline you to value them more than they deserve. The Unfortunate, if they have sensibility, are the most humane. The following tribute flows from a heart unfeignedly wounded with the miseries of it's fellow-creatures; a tribute, which, if it can be, in any degree, useful to the excellent cause which it is intended to support, may be diffused, with a peculiar propriety by *you*, on account of your disposition, character, and situation.

It is not my aim, in this letter, to enter into minute discussions, and calculations. I wish

wish to present, and enforce, to you, Sir, and to my other readers, those leading topicks, and objects, which, on the great question, in which you, and all good men, are deeply interested, will most probably, whenever they are dispassionately, and maturely considered, determine the heart, and reason. Any thinking, and benevolent mind, almost disdains to inquire whether our sugar-plantations would flourish, if the present mode of purchasing, and harrassing the Negroes was abolished; it disdains to inquire into the possible, into the probable diminution of our publick revenues, when the following alternative presses on the soul, and is clamorous for an answer;—*Whether a great part of our species, are to be happy, or miserable, in the extreme?*

I shall, however, make some remarks on the sophistry by which the present system of our West Indian trade is defended. And I shall assert, and vindicate, the right which the Negroes inherit, from nature, and from Hea-

ven ; from the laws of God, and man, of rising against their oppressors, with a just, and destructive indignation. The propriety, the *necessity*, with which an ingenuous writer must be impressed, of enforcing this important, this palpable truth in it's own nature, shows how shamefully, how astonishingly (were it not usual) the human mind may be corrupted, and stupified, by selfishness ; by habit, and prejudice ; and by power.

I will not particularly, and idly animadvert, on the charge brought against the Africans, of their selfishness, and cruelty to each other, while they are in their native country. The charge has been repeatedly confuted, to the shame of Englishmen. Their greatest domestic, and civil calamities, have originated from *us*. We carry commerce, and rapacity, with us, whithersoever we go ;—to the East ; to the West ; and to the South. We have been almost as remarkable as the old Romans (but from motives more fordid than
military

military glory) for extending the melancholy dominion of war, and desolation; and with *their* arrogant, and vain-glorious language, those who were impelled by every cogent reason upon earth, to oppose our progress, we have pronounced, *Barbarians*. We rob remote nations of their territories, and their wealth; but with a more fatal hostility, we rob them of the simplicity of their manners; of the tranquil enjoyment of their lives. The time will come when the natives of OTAHEITE will severely lament that an English foot ever landed on their island.

It may likewise be proved; it *has* been proved, that the West Indian commerce might proceed, and thrive, without this infamous traffick in the persons of the Africans. The necessity of the traffick, for our plantations, abroad, and for our finances, at home, has been often, and vehemently urged, by no means with masterly political argument; but with a total desertion from
equity

equity, and humanity. If we recollect how the vague, and abandoned plea of necessity, hath, of late, been obtruded on us, to vindicate cruelty, and rapacity, in both the INDIES, we might apprehend that it has completely superseded all private, and publick virtue. The highwayman and the foot-pad, might plead necessity, to justify *their* trade, with equal sense, and morality. Can we presume to justify, with the unfeeling sophistry of any advantages upon earth, the dragging of our unhappy victims from their native soil; the tearing of the tenderest domestick ties, and of the hearts which are, by *them* united;—the harrassing, the torturing, of the human body; and the agonizing of the human soul!—the perversion of Beings whom the Almighty hath endowed with reasoning, and immortal minds, into mere animals of drudgery; into mere implements of labour? Every man who is a friend to the slave-trade, answers these questions, by his language, and conduct, in the affirmative; and

and by that language and conduct, he declares, that we may fairly commit any crime, to promote our interest, which is warranted by the profligate habits, and prejudices of the world, and which, with a little common ingenuity, may escape the cognizance of the laws.

The objection of the loss of revenue, which is urged against the abolition of the slave-trade, I will not elaborately refute; as I wish not to insult the cause of justice, and humanity, which I have, now, represented, without exaggeration. Gold has one effect on human nature, which is at war with alchymy; like MEDUSA's head, it turns the hearts of private subjects, and of ministers of state, into stone. It fascinates families, and kingdoms, into a fond belief, that the sign is the substance; that a piece of inert matter is life, and vivacity, and pleasure; that the means of happiness are happiness itself. Thus, with the merited judgement of Heaven on a base,
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and inordinate passion, we are cheated *out* of true enjoyment, *into* a luxurious misery ; into a splendid poverty. Need politicians be reminded by me, after all that has been written by a LOCKE, a MONTESQUIEU, and a BURKE, that wealth may be destructive, as well as useful to a state ? They who are not convinced, that this maxim is operating inauspiciously, in England, must be very injudicious, or very inattentive ; they must be deluded by the tinsel of life. The nerves, and power of a state, principally result from the prosperity of the useful arts, and from publick virtue. Affluent finances are indispensably requisite, in a great modern empire ; but that empire, and that man, who act as if wealth alone was necessary to their welfare ; and who are determined to augment it, by any means ; even with a direct violation of the rights of others ; however specious appearances may be, in their favour, they are contributing to their own calamity, and ruin, by the error of their judgement, and by the obliquity

liquity of their manners. Most of the rules that should govern an individual, should govern a state; and why should it *not* be so? For what are states but collections of individuals? It were to be wished that statesmen were of my humble opinion; for, then, politicks would be an easy, honest, humane, and effectual science.

The defence of the slave-trade, by insisting that the Africans are far inferiour to Europeans, in the faculty of reason; nay, that, in this respect, they are, absolutely, on a level with the animal creation, is equally foolish, and impudent. We have nothing that amounts to proof that they are not equal to *us*, in the powers of intellect. In my youth, I was intimately acquainted with FLOYER SYDENHAM, who died in London, several years ago. He had a vigorous understanding; he was a very learned man; he translated, in a masterly style, many of the works of PLATO; he was well known to some of the most learn-

ed men of this country ; but he died, unrewarded for his merit. He had travelled into Africa ; to a considerable distance from the coast. I have heard him warmly praise both the morals, and understandings of the Negroes ; he conversed with persons of princely rank, in that country, of both sexes ; and he bestowed high encomiums on the dignity of their manners, and on their acute, and sensible conversation. *His* authority is far better founded ; more ingenuous ; more respectable, than that of a Guinea Captain, a West-India merchant, or a member for LIVERPOOL. Our liberal education has not been diffused among the Negroes ; therefore, we know not what it would produce. Yet we are not without examples of African capacities which have made a considerable progress in science, and in polite literature. I very earnestly wish that some persons of high rank in this kingdom, would make fair, and persevering experiments, on the talents of the natives of Africa ; that they would give them

them a regular, and learned education. Thus should we see how those talents would expand ; and while a most manly, and honourable attention was payed to these objects of moderate expence, we should have no need of a part of the revenue which is procured by the dreadful sufferings of the poor Negroes. A solicitude for the cultivation of *their* minds, and a prosecution of objects equally glorious, would banish the destructive influence of boxers, jockies, and courtezans.

But to suppose, that, if they are inferiour to us in the natural endowments of the mind, we are warranted, by that inferiority, to treat them cruelly, is a proposition, which, for its barbarity, both of sense, and disposition, deserves not an answer. Should not we exclaim, in the spirit of just, and generous resentment, against a tyrannical master, who claimed the absurd, and inhuman privilege of beating his *white* servant, and of making him labour excessively, because he

was unfortunately, a very weak, and illiterate person? And if we imagine that our capacities are stronger than those of our brethren of AFRICA, have we any shadow of right to treat them harshly, and unmercifully, because their complexions are *black*; because they, and their ancestors, derived a sable hue from a vertical sun;—from * *beams culminating from the equator*?

It has been asserted, that it is fit that one part of mankind should suffer, to contribute to the interest, and happiness, of a far greater part. When the proposition is applied to us, and our black Slaves, it is equally fraught with selfishness, and futility. I shall not pay any regard to national, and analogous calculation; for it is of no consequence to my present purpose. But unless we are determined to trample on all moral obligations, we will not insist that it is proper that five hundred thousand human beings should be made miserable

* Paradise lost.

miserable, to promote, I will not say, the real conveniences, and pleasures ; but the mean, and ostentatious luxury, of fifty millions ; of a hundred millions ; of any number that can be given, or imagined. If any politician imagines that he will render the state over which he presides, vigorous, and flourishing, by distressing an immense number of people, he will violently counteract the laws of nature, and of Heaven ; and, therefore, in the last result, he will bring great evils on his country, instead of befriending it. In *this* kingdom, where our superiours, in station, and power, dare not exercise a West Indian tyranny over their inferiours, *sufficient* are the sufferings of the poor, and the industrious, to support the caprice, and extravagance, of the idle, and the rich. But as justice, and equal laws, are yet in force amongst us, the moral necessity of being industrious, to gain a subsistence, is not, of itself, productive of calamity. It was not in the moral system of a good, and wise Creator,

ator, that any great family of the universal community should be miserable without having been criminal ; it was not in *his* system, unsystematically to plan, that they should be instrumental to the pleasure of others, by dragging a painful existence, themselves. He foresaw, when he created mankind, that they would be placed in extremely diversified situations ; that various impulses, and necessities, would call forth the exercise, and exertion, of their various faculties ; and that some would enjoy far more external advantages than others ; even within the pale of mild, and salutary government. But all *His* glorious acts, and dispensations, are characteristic of the COMMON FATHER ; so providentially hath He constituted our frame, that our well-being ; our happiness ; sufficient happiness for our transitory state, is an object of common attainment ; it may as certainly be acquired by the Peasant, as by the King. It is the appointed reward of our choice ; of our laudable, and persevering endeavours, and
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improvements ; in other words, it is the appointed reward of virtue. Even labour is far from being incompatible with health of body, and satisfaction of mind ; if it is not effected by absolute compulsion ; and if it is not excessive. But if to gratify our inordinate passions, we sink any number of our species to a painful servitude, we rob them of every enjoyment, of every comfort, of life. Nay if we merely deprive them of their liberty, we rob them of the essential, and inalienable privileges of their nature ; freedom, and virtue. For when a man ceases to be free, he loses the power, and the disposition, to be virtuous. Then let insatiable commerce, and false policy, shrink from their impious, from their sacrilegious pretensions. They have no right to enslave a single individual ; if even by enslaving *him*, they could procure luxury for a whole nation. By enslaving *one* person, do *they* *know*, or do they consider, *what they do* ? They insult Omnipotence ; they check, as it were,

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the breath of the Deity; for they deaden three of his best inspirations. They annihilate his three characteristicks, his three representatives, upon earth. *Let us create man, said God, in our own image.* And what do you think, is the liveliest image of God, in this lower world? Undoubtedly, the human mind; but not unless it comprehends, in it's power, and in it's action, *Reason, Freedom, and Virtue.*

I have considered the Africans in the WEST INDIES, not only as slaves, but as slaves most rigourously, and inhumanly treated. This, Sir, we well know, has been proved by innumerable documents, and evidences. A few humane, and amiable exceptions, destroy not the general, and prevailing truth; it is, indeed, corroborated, or rather evinced, by the barbarous, and sanguinary Edicts, which have been established, against those unhappy people; and which have been absurdly, and insolently, termed, *Laws.*

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These reflections, and sentiments, Sir, arose in my mind, after it had been acquainted with the desperate attempts of the unfortunate Negroes, in the island of HISPANIOLA, to recover their freedom. I shall now proceed to objects which are more immediately connected with this recent information.

Whenever these unhappy people have risen in their own defence, in a ship, on a plantation, or through an island, it is remarkable, that the christian narrators of the event, in relating the particular acts of violence of the insurgents, have generally branded them, with the term, *Savages*. I see, in the morning Herald of the 1st of November, the following sage discovery, written with all the coldness, sagacity, and eloquence, of a news-monger. "Murder, and massacre, are, generally, the first steps taken by the Negroes, when they throw off their subjection. To these they, sometimes, add the ravages of fire: and therefore, when they make so

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great

"great a head, as the accounts from JAMAICA state them to have done, in HISPANIOLA, every thing dreadful is to be apprehended." This is all very true, master PARAGRAPH; and now, as you have served my honest purpose, I have done with *you*. But I must ask a plain, and fair question, or two, of those phlegmatick, and unfeeling narrators, in general; of the avowed advocates for the slave-trade; of those who grossly misrepresent the African character; and of the personal tyrants of the unhappy Negroes. If any body of Europeans were bought as slaves; treated with that oppression, and inhumanity, with which, it is well known, the Negroes are treated, in the WEST INDIES, notwithstanding all the dissingenuous industry which has, of late, been used, to make the contrary appear; and if the most deplorable servitude seemed to be inevitably entailed on themselves, and their posterity, unless they hazarded some desperate exertions for their emancipation;—
 should

should not we approve their conduct, or their violence (call it which you please) should not we crown it with eulogium, if they exterminated their tyrants with fire, and sword? Should they deliberately inflict the most exquisite tortures on those tyrants, would they not be excusable, in the moral judgement of those who properly value (if it is possible properly to value) those inestimable blessings, personal, rational, and religious liberty? In the noble tempests of their minds, not less dreadful than the unexampled hurricanes, which, a few years ago, visited those devoted islands; in their just, though desperate assertions of the inalienable privileges of the human race, they, by no means, equal the premeditated, and enormous acts of barbarity, which they daily suffer from their more than Egyptian task-masters. And yet from the base motives of selfishness; to procure two or three articles of luxury; of the superfluities of life, these barbarities are commit-

ted, by men on whom the benevolent light of the gospel hath shone ; by Englishmen, who pretend to be jealous of the freedom of mankind ; but, who, while they practice, while they suffer, the slave-trade, are very *criminally* ostentatious of *their own*.

In any instances of gloomy, and unrelenting cruelty, on the one side ; and of despair thrown into correspondent action, on the other, *we* are (to speak properly) the savages ; the Africans act like *men* ; like beings endowed with rational, and immortal minds ; with warm, and generous sentiments, and affections ; for the very insurrections, against which we stupidly, and insolently exclaim, are so many natural, and moral proofs, that if we gave them humane, and generous treatment, they would return it with gratitude, and fidelity. These returns for that treatment have been experienced, in several instances. Indeed, we have, in general, been industrious to eradicate their amiable qualities

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ties. The man who feels not gross injuries, never possessed a liberal thought, and never performed a liberal action. If the Negroes were as invariably passive in their horrible state of slavery, as our West-Indians (who are equally unacquainted with human nature, and with humane offices) would *have* them to be, they might, on some foundation, class them with the lowest, and basest of the animal creation.

When, by the iron hand of commerce, a being endowed with reason, and with all it's glorious privileges, is doomed to the most mortifying, and afflicting servitude ; is doomed to be a victim to the despotism, and extreme barbarity of another ; if, with a favourable opportunity, he kills his oppressor, self-preservation justifies the deed (for his life was reduced to a lingering, and tormenting death) it is justified by natural, and revealed religion ; by the fixed, and eternal moral œconomy of the Deity. Whenever

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we flagrantly, and repeatedly, violate that
oeconomy, we must expect (even in *this*
world) from it's powerful influence, which,
indeed, is, in other words, the energy of the
Deity Himself, a severe, and conspicuous re-
taliation. The cries, therefore, of the Afri-
cans, against their tyrants, is the *Voice*—
their revenge, is the *Act*—of NATURE, and
of GOD.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Your obliged,

and most obedient Servant,

PERCIVAL STOCKDALE.

DURHAM, Nov. 6th, 1791.

A P P E N D I X.

IN the spring of the year 1773, a young Negro, whose person, and features, were remarkably agreeable, escaped from his tyrant, a master of a ship, which lay, then, at anchor, on the Thames. He was, most unfortunately, taken;—he shot himself, soon after he was brought again on board of the ship. An excellent, and amiable poet, after he was acquainted with this deplorable event, wrote a beautiful poetical epistle, supposed to be addressed by the Negro to his African mistress, when he had formed his fatal resolution. The poem was anonymous; I have heard the name of it's authour; but I have forgotten it. I read the epistle with a melancholy pleasure; and I addressed a hundred lines to the poet, from whose humane imagination it flowed. They were printed in

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the Publick Advertiser, in the beginning of July, 1773. I hope the time will come, when they will be republished completely. From those lines, I now give two extracts, which are very applicable to the sentiments contained in the preceding letter to Mr SHARP. The reader will observe that my theory, and my feelings, on the slave-trade are just what they were, nineteen years ago. I persevere in the wishes expressed in the following verses ;—but I more ardently wish, that *those wishes* were superseded by just, and equitable, and christian legislation.

For this disposition of uniform benevolence, in favour of an infinite number of our oppressed, and tormented species, the returns which I expect from *man*, are, ridicule, and malignity ; but I humbly hope, that it will be propitiously accepted ; that it will be *thought of, for my Good*, by my Eternal Father ; by *the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort*.

Extracts

Extracts from a Poetical Epistle to the
 Authour of a Poem, entitled,
THE DYING NEGRO.

* * * * *

May the dread justice, which thy youth implores,
 With speedy ruin reach West-Indian shoars!
 Oh! may the Negroes, with an iron rod,
 Avenge the cause of NATURE, and of GOD!
 May they, in happy combination, rise,
 Torture their doom, or liberty their prize;
 Rush, with resiftless fury, on their foes;
 By one great effort expiate AFRIC's woes;
 Eager each mark of slavery to efface,
 Of their pale fiends exterminate the race!

* * * * *

And as the poet's warm, expansive soul,
 Spreads it's benevolence from pole to pole;
 Loves man, his brother, in Siberian snow,
 Or where the spicy gales of AFRIC blow;
 Then I'll enjoy the Negro's happy lot,
 His purling rivulet, his peaceful cot;

Behold him, stretched beneath a fragrant shade,
 Breathe fervid accents to a table maid ;
 Or pass, in mirth, and festal song, the day ;
 Streams, groves, and hills, responsive to his lay ;
 No northern ruffian near, importing woes !
 No ruthless christian, to disturb repose !



F I N I S.